VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education
Washington Secretary of State

WASHINGTON STATE CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12
STUDENT HANDOUT, LESSON 1
THEME: BALLOTS, POLLS & VOTING BOOTHS

"The hottest places in Hades are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, remain neutral." (Dante)

ACTIVITY: A

Examine the images 11-26 of diverse voting mechanisms and vote counting machines, and then answer the questions that follow.

Image 11:   #11

Among the earliest of voting
tools, paper may be "low tech"
but it still works.

Images 12, 13:

Lever machines were early among efforts to make voting less
subject to ballot tampering. Machines with levers are not very
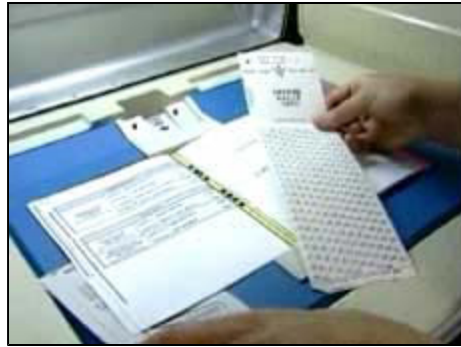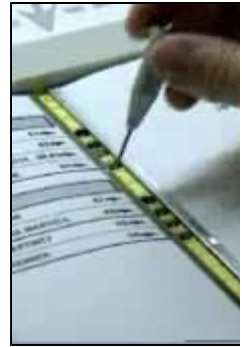common today.

#12

#13

Images 14, 15:

The punch card system involves a booth, the machine with guide and the ballot card itself. The voting tool (stylus) makes a hole next to your choice. The card is then fed into a card reader (see image 24). This method and its "chads" were made famous in the 2000 presidential election.
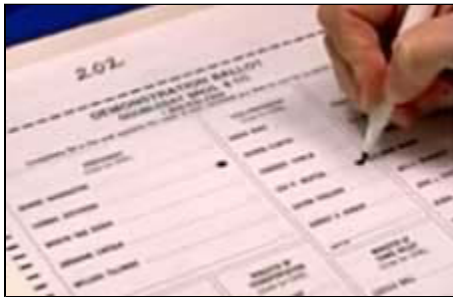
#14

#15

Images 16, 17, 18:

Most students are familiar with the "fill in the bubbles" form of testing, so this method is no stranger. Note again in image 17 the theme of safeguarding privacy. Image 18 reveals the "write in" option as well as numerous choices from among diverse political parties.
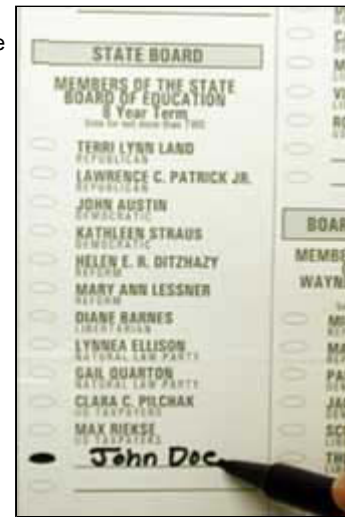
#18

#16

#17

Image 19:

This ballot is similar to that in image 16 but with a variation that attempts to avoid counting errors resulting from incomplete marks in the ovals. The voter draws a solid line between the black marks to form an arrow (as in the two lines above the pencil.)

#19

Images 20, 21, and 22:   #22

This electronic machine allows you to touch the button next to your choice, shows your choices with lights and allows you to change your mind or correct an error before finalizing your ballot.

#20   #21

Image 23:

This voting machine is common in Washington in 2008.

#23

Images 24, 25, and 26:

These images display two ways to tabulate results from two different ballot types.

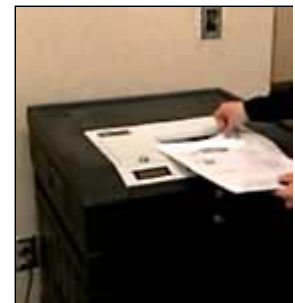#24   #25   #26

Now, applying your powers of observation, address the following questions using the evidence available in images 11-26. If this is a writing as answers should be one to two paragraphs in length for each letter.

A. What do images 11 through 23 have in common? Support with examples.
B. Which voting methods might have avoided the problems encountered in the year 2000 ballot controversy? Why?
C. Which method of voting would be most accommodating to persons with various physical challenges?
D. Which voting methods seem to be most efficient in terms of processing the largest number of ballots at a time?
E. Which voting methods seem to be most reliable in terms of avoiding either voter mistakes or correction mistakes?
F. Voting by absentee ballot (vote by mail) is gaining in popularity, so from these images, which method of voting would be most easily adapted while still remaining efficient and reliable?

G. From what you have seen in images 1 through 26, do you think we should keep the option for voters to choose voting at the polls or by mail? Why?

H. If we could do it, would you like the option to vote via the Internet using either website voting or an email ballot? What would be the advantages of this method? What concerns would you want addressed first?